

THE WILLIAM ROCKHILL NELSON GALLERY OF ART  
AND ATKINS MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS

N E W S                      F L A S H E S

January,

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LOAN EXHIBITIONS: The interesting and important group of French paintings of the late 17th and early 18th centuries now being shown in the North and Central Loan Galleries will continue through January 17th.

These paintings are more than a mere exhibition of the work of world-famed artists, they are also a record of the history of France of the age they represent. One can sense the simple, still rugged taste of the period of Louis XIII in the straight-forward Portrait of a Gentleman by Philippe de Champaigne, the grandiose, theatrical artificiality of the time of Louis XIV in the Baroque Marechal de Villars by Hyacinthe Rigaud, and the charming feminine grace of the epoch of Louis XV in the exquisite Portrait of Mme. Sophie by Nattier.

The haughty, self-indulgent features of Louis XIV, the Roi Soleil, framed in the elaborately curled wig, gaze out at one from the portrait by Pierre Mignard. It presents Louis in his forties, when he was still the dazzling monarch, the patron of Moliere and Lulli, the lavish host of theatricals and ballets in which he himself danced. He had just launched upon the folly of Versailles which was to cost fifty million dollars before his death, and it was before the sobering influence of Mme. de Maintenon changed his nature into the terrifying Louis the Great.

Two other personages in the exhibition are closely related to Louis XIV. The complacent Marquis de Montespan, so superbly and richly presented by Nicolas de Largilliere, was the husband of the famous Marquise who for years was the favorite of the King. Then, when his attentions began to wane, she appealed to the notorious Catherine Monvoisin, a sorceress and one versed in witchcraft, and they devised the scheme to poison Louis that was discovered just in time. So many personages of the court were implicated in the scandal that the Marquise was merely dismissed from court and she retired to a convent where she used the pension given her by the King to assist such men of letters as Corneille and Racine.

The dashing Marquis Claude de Villars, with his voluminous fur trimmed cloak, shining armour, and baton of office, was Louis' greatest soldier, a Marshal of France and one of the most astute generals that country has ever had. His career was diversified; he fought in the Dutch Wars; on the staff of the Elector of Bavaria he battled with the Turks and was ambassador to Vienna. His greatest military feats came in the War of the Spanish Succession. He was seriously wounded in the battle of Malplaquet, won the final and decisive battle of Denain for France and so aided Louis to place his grandson on the throne of Spain. The King sent for him the day before he died to tender the thanks of France to a great General. Villars continued to be active under the Regency of the Duc d'Orleans and his last fighting took place in the War of the Polish Succession.

Perhaps the most attractive portrait in the entire exhibition is that of Mme. Sophie, the lovely daughter of Louis XV. Nattier has painted her as the Vestal Virgin in flowing robes of gray and mauve, an admirable foil for her exquisite complexion. All of the daughters of Louis XV were beautiful and while they were young, the King had a great affection for them, giving each a nickname. Sophie was "Chiffe" or tatters. As they grew older, a coldness grew up between the daughters and their father and Sophie especially resented Mme. du Barri, as that lady tells us in her memoirs. Du Barri also tells us that court etiquette demanded certain amenities, such as a daily visit by the King to his family. Soon this was reduced to a minute's call and a bare good-day, then when the daughters returned the visit, they would wear their most elaborate gowns but would refuse to have their hair dressed, as a token of their lack of respect. Studying the calm, patrician features of Mme. Sophie, it is difficult to imagine her so forgetting her position.



Other paintings reflect the fascinating if artificial age. The self-portrait of Largilliere in hunting costume, surrounded by his family in formal drawing-room garb, which is a study for the large canvas in the Louvre, and the fine portrait of Hubert Robert, painted by his close friend, Fragonard, when they were students together in Rome. The whole exhibition offers an admirable opportunity to study one of the most brilliant epochs of French art.

EXHIBITION OF PHOTOGRAPHS: The Camera Pictorialists will hold their annual exhibition in the South Loan Gallery during the month of January. Fifty prints, representing fourteen exhibitors, will be included.

Some of the outstanding photographs are If Elected I Promise, a satirical print of a lion with his mouth open and a new and different type of shot of the Liberty Memorial by William Crick. Howard Harvey contributes a lovely Summer Ghosts of sails on the water and J. C. Turney has ten prints, including Bewildered, a character study of three old men and a beautiful composition of a dancer. MacLay Lyon is represented by four examples, including the amusing orator, You Can't Learn a Republican Anything, and a fine character portrait of a prospector. Dr. Glen Broyles has seven plates of his excellent botanical studies and a fine American scene called Down Mexico Way. Joe Sarvent has contributed several of his impressionistic landscapes, E. H. Morrison of Fort Scott, Kansas, has three prints and D. D. Clark's architectural scenes have superb, diffused light.

The Camera Pictorialists are known nationally for their excellent work and this exhibition is up to their usual high standards. It will open December 31st and continue through January.

PRINTS BY ROUAULT: On January 19th, a most important group of prints by the French artist, Georges Rouault, will open in the Loan Galleries. This is the first comprehensive collection of graphic art by this outstanding painter and will consist of over one hundred examples of lithographs, etchings, and wood-engravings, over one-half of them in full colour. A wide range of subject matter will be covered; real and imaginary portraits, clowns, circus girls, and religious scenes. Rouault has been engaged on this work for over twenty years and by special arrangement, trial proofs of his most recent work will also be exhibited.

Georges Rouault is one of the most profound artists of the contemporary period, the only one who can imbue his religious subjects with a true, spiritual feeling. He was born in Paris in 1871. His grandfather collected prints, even those of Daumier and Manet, which was a most advanced taste in those days. He ardently desired his grandson to become a painter, but his father apprenticed him at the age of fourteen to a maker of stained glass, for the absurd sum of fifty centimes - ten cents - a week. His work here, and especially his handling of 12th and 13th century windows, brought to the studio for mending, has been a lasting influence in all his painting and prints. Not only does he continue to use the rich, ruby reds, the nocturnal blues, the opalescent tones of the imperfect medieval glass, but the heavy black outline of all his drawing is like the ribbons of lead that hold the pieces of ancient glass together.

All during his apprenticeship he went to night classes to study drawing and finally when he was eighteen, his father allowed him to leave the glass maker and enroll with Gustave Moreau, that almost forgotten painter of mythological subjects which Degas once dubbed "gods wearing watch chains". However, Moreau was a liberal instructor deeply versed in classic culture and a sound craftsman, and Rouault profited especially from his master's friendship. Much of the mystical quality seen in his prints and paintings derives from Moreau.

Rouault was never a popular painter with the general public and when he was forty, despairing of his lack of success in this medium, he turned to experimenting with graphic processes. His originality won the attention of that astute dealer, Vollard, who commissioned him to illustrate several books. Almost all of his talents since that time have been devoted to this field and it is characteristic of his desire for perfection that the plates of "Misery and War" were completed in 1927 but have not yet been issued. Many of them will be included in proof states in this exhibition.

His technical procedure is extremely interesting. In his painting he had combined every conceivable material and technique and he



builds up his plates very much the same way. His preliminary drawing is reproduced on a copper plate by a photo-mechanical process, then he uses every instrument known to the engraver and every acid known to the etcher to obtain the multiple tones and values he desires. His use of colour in prints is again unique and no other graphic artist has ever achieved the rich, singing tones, the extraordinary blacks.

The work of Rouault is so arresting that this will prove to be one of the most interesting exhibitions of the year. The prints will be augmented with a small gouache portrait of "Vollard as a Clown", lent anonymously.

MASTERPIECE OF THE MONTH: The appealing, elfish portrait of a young girl by Eugene Speicher, entitled "Pigtails", will be featured as the Masterpiece for the month of January. This is the 1939 presentation of the Friends of Art to the Gallery collection. Representing one of America's foremost artists, it strengthens appreciably the contemporary group.

Speicher was born in Buffalo, New York, in 1883. He attended the local schools there and after graduation worked in a lumber yard. Some natural talent moved him to study in the night art classes of the Buffalo Academy and when in less than a year he had sold his first canvas and won a scholarship to the Art Students' League, the lumber business was forgotten and he decided to become an artist.

After his first year in New York, he met Robert Henri and immediately joined his classes. At that time Henri was the dominant influence in art teaching in America. He was the first to break with Victorian conservatism, he taught direct painting and, more important, counselled his students to go to the life about them for subject matter. Speicher gives complete credit to Henri for his success today. He has been exhibiting and winning prizes for over thirty years, although he is only fifty-six, and the three or four canvases he completes a year are usually sold before they leave his easel.

He is represented in over thirty public museums and countless private collections and has won all possible prizes. In reviewing the fact that there has been no outstanding school of portraiture in America from the Republican period until the present time, Cahill says: "The contemporary standard bearer is Eugene Speicher who may be considered the leading portrait painter and one of the soundest figure painters in this country today. His work has realistic honesty, structural gravity, and sober colour".

"Pigtails" is Speicher's latest canvas and was completed just this fall. It is one of his most appealing portraits, representing a winsome girl in her teens. Her reflective expression is belied by the hoydenish effect produced by the unruly braids and the lock of hair flaring out from her forehead. The head is beautifully and solidly painted and the colours, the fresh carnation of the flesh, the blue ribbons, dusty pink sweater, and orange chair are most personal. Such immediate charm, coupled with a complete mastery of his craft, gives this latest expression of Speicher's mature artistry an instant and lasting appeal.

WEDNESDAY EVENING LECTURES: Mr. Gardner will continue the series of lectures on French Painting through the month of January. All five lectures for that period will be devoted to the 18th century.

On January 3rd, the subject will be Watteau and His Followers. It was the exquisite fêtes gallants and fêtes champêtres of Watteau, with their accent on the new, more sophisticated and intimate society that set the mood for the painting of the century. The lecture of January 10th will discuss the pastellists, La Tour and Perronneau, and the fine portrait painters, such as Nattier, Tocque, Drouais, and Van Loo. On January 17, Boucher and Fragonard, who typify the life of the period, will be presented. The genre painters Chardin, Oudry, Desportes, and the moralist, Greuze, will be the subject for January 24th, and on the 31st, the landscapists, Hubert Robert and Vernet, with the portrait painters of the end of the century, Vigée Lebrun, Duplessis, and Gabilly Gayard, will be discussed.

On these Wednesday Evenings, the Gallery is always open at seven, the lecture is from eight to nine, and there is no admission charge to the Gallery or lecture.



January, 1940

FRIENDS OF ART: On Wednesday morning, January 10, at 11:00, a group of Spanish painters now working in Paris will be discussed. Paintings by these men will be used. The discussion subject for January 24th will be the French painter Georges Rouault, whose prints will at that time be on exhibition in the Loan Galleries. Examples of his work will be brought to the Library.

RADIO BROADCASTS: The series of "Intimate Glimpses into the Lives of the Masters" over Station WDAF will continue with the story of the life of the Spanish artist Goya on January 7, followed by "Lady Fitzgerald", the subject of the Gallery's painting by John Hoppner, on January 21. These broadcasts, which are presented jointly by the Gallery and the University of Kansas City drama department, are given at 9:30 o'clock on alternate Sunday evenings.

CONSULTATION HOURS: The Gallery Staff is always happy to give whatever information possible on objects in private collections if they can be brought to the Gallery. The hours of 10 to 12 every Friday morning are announced as consultation hours and it is only at that time that objects can be inspected. In no case is it possible to give a valuation of objects.

#### CALENDAR FOR JANUARY

Tues.,	Jan. 2	-	2:00	-	Library	-	Asiatic Study Club
Wed.,	" 3	-	8:00	-	Lecture	-	Watteau and His Followers
Sun.,	" 7	-	3:30	-	Concert	-	Kansas City Concert Orchestra
			9:30	-	WDAF	-	Radio Broadcast
Tues.,	" 9	-	10:00	-	Library	-	Book Study Club
			1:00	-	Library	-	Art Study Club
Wed.,	" 11	-	11:00	-	Library	-	Friends of Art Study Club
			8:00	-	Lecture	-	French 18th Cen. Pastellists and Portraitists
Sun.,	" 14	-	3:30	-	Concert	-	Mu Phi Musical Sorority
Tues.,	" 16	-	2:00	-	Library	-	Asiatic Study Club
Wed.,	" 17	-	8:00	-	Lecture	-	Boucher and Fragonard
Sun.,	" 21	-	3:30	-	Concert	-	Sigma Alpha Iota
Tues.,	" 23	-	10:00	-	Library	-	Book Club
Wed.,	" 24	-	11:00	-	Library	-	Friends of Art Study Club
			8:00	-	Lecture	-	French 18th Cen. Genre and Moralist Painters
Sun.,	" 28	-	4:00	-	Concert	-	Students of Miss Forsythe and Mrs. Hunt
Wed.,	" 31	-	8:00	-	Lecture	-	French 18th Cen. Landscapists

#### GALLERY HOURS

Daily from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., except Sunday, 2 p.m. to 6 p.m.  
Monday, closed all day.

Wednesday Evening, 7 p.m. to 10 p.m. October through May.

Free Days: Saturday, Sunday, and public holidays. At all other times, admission twenty-five cents for adults, ten cents for children under twelve.

William Rockhill Nelson Gallery of Art  
Atkins Museum of Fine Arts  
Kansas City, Missouri

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